

EQUALITY SCREENING

Equality Impact Assessment guidance should be considered when completing this form.

POLICY/FUNCTION/ACTIVITY	LEAD OFFICER
Planning Policy - Runnymede Borough Council Energy Supplementary Planning Document (SPD)	Stephanie Broadley

A. What is the aim of this policy, function or activity? Why is it needed? What is it hoped to achieve and how will it be ensured it works as intended? Does it affect service users, employees or the wider community?

The aim of the new Runnymede Borough Council Energy Supplementary Planning Document (SPD) is to set out the Council's expectations in respect of energy performance and carbon emission reduction standards associated with new development (including retrofit development where planning permission is required) and help ensure that development proposals are designed to mitigate the impacts of climate change in line with 2030 Local Plan objectives.

SPDs do not introduce new policy but are needed to provide further detail and guidance to improve implementation of adopted policies. The Energy SPD builds upon the policies set out in the Runnymede 2030 Local Plan (notably, Policies SD7: Sustainable Design and SD8: Renewable & Low Carbon Energy) to encourage sustainable design, focusing on energy efficiency measures and the incorporation of low carbon and renewable energy technologies and as such, it is a fundamental part of the planning policy 'toolkit'. When finalised, the document will be adopted as an SPD and will be an important material consideration during the determination of planning applications.

Providing further guidance on implementing the energy-related policies of the 2030 Local Plan is an identified action in the Council's Climate Change Action Plan, adopted in February 2024. It was agreed that additional planning guidance was needed to improve the environmental sustainability of new development in the Borough and reduce carbon emissions in line with local and national net zero carbon targets.

The additional guidance provided within the SPD aims to provide clear information for applicants and decision-makers about energy and carbon emission reduction policy requirements and expectations, clearly setting out what detail the Council expects developers to provide to assist the decision-making process, and to encourage developers to promote excellence and best practice in energy efficient, sustainable development.

The Energy SPD will not affect any employees or service users on the basis of a protected characteristic(s) they have. The SPD will mainly affect developers of proposed schemes which require planning applications, and local communities including people who will live or work in the proposed developments. Any effects it has on the wider Borough community, including those groups with protected characteristics is likely to be beneficial through the delivery of new or redeveloped energy efficient, sustainable homes and buildings.

B. Is this policy, function or activity relevant to equality? Does the policy, function or activity relate to an area in which there are known inequalities, or where different groups have different needs or experience? Remember, it may be relevant because there are opportunities to promote equality and greater access, not just potential based on adverse impacts or unlawful discrimination.

The Protected Characteristics are Sex, Age, Disability, Race, Religion and Beliefs, Sexual Orientation, Marriage and Civil Partnership, Gender Reassignment, Pregnancy and Maternity.

There are not assessed to be any potential negative impacts on any protected characteristics if the Energy SPD were to be adopted. The SPD promotes sustainable design in new and retrofitted redevelopments in order to avoid an over-reliance on energy use in winter (primarily fossil-fuel generated energy use) and overheating in summer. It is therefore anticipated that there will be positive impacts for existing and future occupants through the delivery of energy efficient, sustainably constructed housing and non-residential development.

By improving the delivery of energy efficient homes and buildings, which use renewable energy technologies to supply energy needs, new and redeveloped homes and buildings are expected to be warmer in the winter, and avoid overheating in the summer. Energy bills are lower due to a reduction in energy consumption, helping people avoid fuel poverty. Fuel poverty can affect anyone, although if a person has one of the protected characteristics the likelihood of them living in fuel poverty can sometimes be higher. Whilst the percentage of households in Runnymede which were fuel poor in 2021 (the latest available data) was lower than the national average (7.2% compared to 13.1%), there are pockets of the Borough with higher than average fuel poor households such as areas of Englefield Green and Chertsey – areas with a higher proportion of social housing. Evidence suggests that those most at risk of ill health from fuel poverty include children and the elderly, and long-term sick and disabled people.

New development and retrofit schemes which require planning permission, including social housing redevelopment schemes and specialist housing schemes aimed at accommodating vulnerable, older or disabled people, will be expected to follow the guidance in the SPD in order to comply with the energy-related policies of the 2030 Local Plan. Following the guidance can potentially lead to upgrades in the energy efficiency of existing social housing, and energy efficient new buildings which are better-insulated and require less energy to heat.

In summary, it is anticipated that the Energy SPD, through the improved implementation of energy performance standards, will provide a positive impact for people with protected characteristics who are more susceptible to fuel poverty and overheating, particularly with regards to age and disability. A review of the comments received following public consultation on the SPD will be undertaken and any implications in terms of equalities will be discussed with the Council's Equalities Group. Continued monitoring of the Energy SPD will take place after it is adopted which may reveal any positive or negative impacts that exist and will assist officers in providing measures that seek to mitigate any negative impacts on any of the protected characteristics.

If the policy, function or activity is relevant to equality then a full Equality Impact Assessment may need to be carried out. If the policy function or activity does not engage any protected characteristics, then you should complete Part C below. Where Protected Characteristics are engaged, but Full Impact Assessment is not required because measures are in place or are proposed to be implemented that would mitigate the impact on those affected or would provide an opportunity to promote equalities please complete Part C.

C. If the policy, function or activity is not considered to be relevant to equality, what are the reasons for this conclusion? Alternatively, if it is considered that there is an impact on any Protected Characteristics but measures are in place or are proposed to be implemented please state those measures and how it/they are expected to have the desired result. What evidence has been used to make this decision? A simple statement of 'no relevance' or 'no data' is not sufficient.

A six-week public consultation on the Energy SPD will provide the opportunity for local communities and other interested parties to provide comments which will be considered in relation to any protected characteristics. Equality implications will also be discussed with the Council's Equalities Group to ensure that the Energy SPD is fully compliant with the Equality Act.

The Energy SPD sets out the Council's expectations in respect of energy performance requirements associated with new development. It is fully consistent and complementary to the Runnymede 2030 Local Plan, which has had a detailed EqIA undertaken at each stage of Plan preparation. The Energy SPD provides detailed guidance to help implement the requirements of Policies SD7 and SD8 of the Runnymede Local Plan which have already been assessed under EqIA to have either positive or neutral impacts on protected characteristics of the population.

Continued monitoring of the Energy SPD will take place after it is adopted which may reveal any positive or negative impacts that exist and will assist officers in providing measures that seek to mitigate any negative impacts on any of the protected characteristics. The SPD is intended to be reviewed and submitted for an equalities assessment 5 years following its adoption.

It is not considered therefore that a full EqIA is required.

Date completed: 23/04/2024 by Stephanie Broadley

Sign-off by senior manager: Judith Orr